

The Young people are a diverse group, with a variety of interests, ideas, talents and life experiences while facing some common challenges and experiences based on their age. Yet media images often reflect stereotypical attitudes about young people and that these stereotypes negatively impact on young people's position within society. The two extremes of young people often depicted, i.e. young achievers and young offenders or troublemakers is a gross misrepresentation of young people that leads to many young people feeling misrepresented. Such extreme representations can lead to negative interactions between the wider community and young people.

The view that is held by the general community of young people impacts on young people's lives. Community fear of young people, particularly in relation to gangs and some youth subcultures can lead to over reactions and the ostracising of young people who are made to feel excluded and who face discrimination in their enjoyment of public space.

Informed, sensitive and professional journalism is a key component in defining young people's public image and young people face significant set backs as a result of ill informed, biased and sensationalist journalism. The Youth Coalition is committed to working closely with the media and with young people in order for a more representative image of young people in the ACT to be illustrated through the media. Many young people are able to clearly represent themselves in the media, however some young people face exploitation by the media. The Youth Coalition is concerned that some young people's actions and comments are taken out of context and that the media can misrepresent and exploit young people in order to promote their own agendas.

Youth affairs receives relatively little coverage – particularly issues that do not sit with either end of the young achievers-young offenders spectrum. There are numerous issues which deserve public attention and recognition for both young people and the youth sector but rarely get coverage in mainstream media. The Youth Coalition believes that an increased and more balanced media representation of young people and youth affairs would lead to benefits for both young people and the youth sector. The Australian Government's failure to commit funded national peak body for youth affairs has exacerbated the lack of national representation on issues affecting young people and aiding in the weakening of young people's position within society.

The Youth Coalition also strongly supports media created by and for young people. As the ACT is limited in population and resources, there are relatively few programs for young people to be involved in media, unlike other regions in Australia featuring youth run television, radio and newspaper sources. The Youth Coalition is highly supportive of attempts by young people to create their own media sources that represent their own experiences and are structured in ways that aim to engage other young people about common issues. The Youth Coalition also recognises the work already done by both young people and adults on alternative and community media such as street press which not only provides young people with engaging material, but often involve innovative and commendable practices of youth participation and skills development.

The Youth Coalition is committed to:

- ◆ Advocating for the media to present more realistic portrayals of young people in the ACT, the issues they face and their achievements.
- ◆ Encouraging the media to seek consent from parents/guardians when dealing with young people and ensuring that young people are not misrepresented.
- ◆ Promoting and supporting young people to become involved in both mainstream and youth media.
- ◆ Promoting the success of the youth sector and young people while continuing to highlight significant issues and challenges for young people and the sector.
- ◆ Continuing to be a key advocate in community and mass media for young people, speaking on issues affecting young people and engaging in a dialogue that is informed by research and evidence even though this may, at times, be in opposition to the mainstream dialogue.
- ◆ Supporting other youth services to effectively engage with the media